

Skilled Trades Working Group Report

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By Kirk Mercer, Alternate Regional Vice-President Vancouver Island

Canadian Apprenticeship Forum Conference, JUNE 5th-7th

On June 5-7, 2016 I attended the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum Conference Apprenticeship Hands on the Future, on behalf of **CUPE BC**

Minister Shirley Bond brought greetings from the provincial government and talked about how they would spend 300 million over the next three years, spread over 5 ministries under the skills plan BC.

The next morning, June 6, I attended a session titled **Preparation, Hiring and Retaining Women**. First up to speak was Judy Lynn Archer from **Women Building Futures** (URL: <http://womenbuildingfutures.com>).

Judy Lynn spoke about their programme which includes: 2 weeks of Worksite Safety Certification: Standard First Aid & CPR (Level One); Scaffold Awareness, Fall Protection, CSTS & WHMIS, H2S Alive, Confined Space, and Elevated Work Platform Certification; 8 weeks of Hands-on Skill Training – Basic Tools, Carpentry, Electrical, Plumbing, Steamfitting/Pipefitting, Welding, Sheet Metal, Drawing and Blueprint Reading, Rigging Fundamentals; 2 weeks of Workplace Culture Awareness©; 4 weeks' academics (trades Math, Science and English) and 2 weeks work experience.

This programme has an 80% completion rate and, after assessments are done they make sure to find the right training, employer and funding from 4 to 8 years, and they provide housing during the training for the pre-apprentice. In the first year an electrical apprentice can earn up to \$73,000.00.

Next up to speak was Cheri Butt from **Women in Resource Development Corporation** (URL: <http://wrdc.nf.ca>). Cheri spoke about **Girls Understanding Skilled Trades Opportunities**. GUSTO! is a FREE workshop for high school girls across Newfoundland and Labrador who are interested in gaining hands-on experience in the carpentry and electrical trades. Participants are guided by two certified tradeswomen.

Cheri also spoke about the **Orientation to Trades and Technology (OTT)**, Specifically **OTT**, which is designed to provide a safe and supportive environment for women to explore trades and technology training programs. For many women, **OTT** can be the first step toward an exciting, new and well-paying career. There are seven major components in the **OTT** program: academic, essential work skills, personal and professional development, hands-on skills development, exploration on the natural resource sector, labour market research and job shadowing. It is a 16-week programme funded by the provincial government.

Last up to speak was Doreen Parsons from **Women Unlimited** (URL: <http://womenunlimitedns.ca>).

Women Unlimited runs a programme called *Career Exploration Program (CEP)* which is a free, 14-week program that allows women to explore their interests in the trades or technologies. Women Unlimited is committed to diversity and encourages applications from African Nova Scotians and other members of the visible minority community, Aboriginal peoples, women living with disabilities and women from the LGBT community. Women Unlimited programs offer a continuum of services from career exploration, support during trades and technology training, transitional services to support women as they move into the trades and technology workforce, and retention services so that women maintain employment in these fields.

The afternoon session I attended was update from the **Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship** and launch of the New Red Seal Occupational Standard. (URL: <http://red-seal.ca>)

Over the last two years, the **Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship** has been engaged in extensive work to make apprenticeship systems work better for industry and apprentices in a collaborative process with federal/provincial/territorial bodies, to harmonize apprenticeship training and strengthen the Red Seal program. They spoke about harmonizing the apprenticeship initiative of 57 red seal trades that started in 2009, and four elements of the new RSOS (Red Seal Occupational Standard) that had to be done:

1. Trade Name- use the same name
2. Total training hours – must be consistent
3. Training levels -must be the same number
4. Sequencing – the content

So far the strategic plan to harmonize the Red Seal trades hopes to achieve 10 by September 2016, an additional 18 by 2017, and hopes to have 90% completed by 2020.

This new model places emphasis on training and skills assessment objectives, learning outcomes and performance criteria. On the red-seal.ca website you can find the Red Seal products.

Last session of the day that I attended was on the **Work-Ready Aboriginal People: A Partnership Approach**.

Brandi Jonathan, of Grand River Employment and Training (Six Nations) spoke about a 22-week programme called WRAP, which enrolls a total of 15 students (between 18-30 years old). This programme combines essential skills upgrading for the trades, cultural awareness, theory, safety certifications, and practical hands-on assignments. Now entering its fifth year, WRAP has graduated 40 out of 58 students, 58% of whom are working in the trades and/or are registered apprentices. This success comes by having an elder journey person who teaches cultural awareness. Find out more at (URL: <http://www.saymag.com/wpsay/grand-river-employment-and-training-great>).

On June 7th, the last session I attended was on **BC Initiatives: An Overview**.

This session was referred to as a “cracker barrel session” which meant 4 sessions going on at the same time in the same room – not recommended. The **ITA** is responsible to lead and coordinate BC’s skilled trades system, and govern and manage the province’s industry trades training and certification system on behalf of the BC government. Work with employers, employees, industry, labour, training providers and government to: Issue credentials, manage apprenticeships, set program standards, provide funding for apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs, Increase opportunities in the trades. Help meet the demands of the labour market. Play a key role in implementing B.C.’s Skills for Jobs Blueprint.

They highlighted the recent government commitment to invest an additional \$7.8M over the next three years in **ITA** Youth programs. Support for Under-Represented Groups the **ITA** oversees programs for groups under-represented in the trades: Aboriginal people in Trades Training (**AITT**), Women in Trades Training (**WITT**), and Immigrants in Trades Training (**ITT**). There was growing interest in trades careers in BC, where more than 7,600 Certificates of Qualification have been awarded in 2015/16. To find out more go to (URL: <http://www.itabc.ca>).